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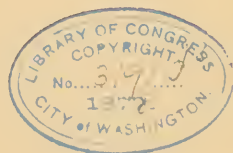


# *LAUREL HILL:*

A POEM.

BY

*ELMER RUÁN COATES.*



PHILADELPHIA.

1878.

*Sherman & Co. Printers.*

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WESTCOTT & THOMSON,  
*Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Philadelphia.*

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SHERMAN & CO.,  
*Printers, Phila.*

# *EXORDIAL.*

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## I.

### TO THE GREAT KNOWN.

YE many friendly, cultured gentlemen  
Whose mighty brains have proud distinguishment  
World-wide, world-envied and perennial,  
Receive the numerous and heart-warm thanks  
For earnest letters so encomial  
Of my beloved, new-born LAUREL HILL.  
If your epistle-language be allowed  
To fly from tongues to ears of your compeers,  
Thus twining me fresh laurels, bearing gold,



*EXORDIAL.*

My great delight and gratitude profound  
Will mount to the empyrean.

II.

TO THE GREAT UNKNOWN.

My many dear and gifted ones, unknown  
To fame and flattering eulogia,  
How frequently you borrowed LAUREL HILL  
Before the poem felt the printer's touch;  
When in the foolscap and the writing-ink,  
And moving in our best society,  
It sought the seals from wisdom and renown.  
How frequently you spoke of "complex joy,"  
Of fireside readings, and the sewing lapped  
To weigh the language of the Graveyard voice  
And "Graveyard wonders in dramatic art."  
How frequently you gave high compliments



EXORDIAL.

Of those you call "the deep and brilliant minds."  
How manifold the notes and interviews  
Concerning time and style of publishment.  
How truly anxious for the definite,  
In satisfaction to "admiring friends."  
Ye many dear and gifted ones unknown,  
Go round those ample circles of your friends  
And say, his manuscript is now in print.  
Say that the work mechanical can boast  
A fine, artistic style. Say that the type  
Is large and kindly to the aged eye.  
Declare "good poetry" is practical;  
That poets are of flesh and bone and blood;  
That, being human, they have human needs,  
And daily *try* to eat and sleep and dress,  
And feel the joys that sanctify a home.  
Fail not to tell them that a little cash



EXORDIAL.

Is valued by the most exalted Muse—  
That friends prove friendship, when they *buy* the book,  
Instead of hinting gratis with its loss.  
When they affirm you speak potential truth,  
That bards have rights that people should respect,  
Send in their names. To *them* I'll send the work—  
To *you*, the title of substantial aids.

THE AUTHOR.



## LAUREL HILL.

---

LONG, sultry suns have baked the ground to dust,  
The walls throw out a languid, tropic heat,  
The room-bound patient pines, and even prays,  
For cooling rain to purify the street.

The thoroughfares present a sickly mass,  
Who fume and fret for folly, fame and trade ;  
The kerchief wipes the moisture from each brow,  
And thousands cross for shelter in the shade.

In all this tillage of uncertain soil  
And fiery slaughter of the precious health,  
How few will reap their fever-planned renown !  
How few will harvest all their sighed-for wealth !



*LAUREL HILL.*

Consumptive forms belie the studied smile,  
And make more gloom than had they moaned aloud;  
Then often flutes are discord with the groans  
That seem as longing for the peaceful shroud.

The overladen horses bow the head,  
And, by endurance, earn our praise and care;  
The house-bird, weary of the prison bar,  
Now feebly quavers minor-tone despair.

The trees are thirsty, and the drooping leaves  
Are mottled by the dusty atmosphere;  
The putrid offal poisons half the town,  
And Wisdom sees an epidemic near.

Fair Philadelphia, of high renown  
In science, manufacturing and art,  
Though you have love and lore and charity,  
Your panorama shocks my head and heart.



LAUREL HILL.

The very prospect of the morrow's work  
Is almost blighting as the solar ray;  
I gladly barter pomp and heat and woe,  
To have the heaven of a rustic day.

I gladly barter all corroding scenes  
For boundless scope, the wood and flowery field:  
My passion *now* is rural solitude,  
And shades of thought that solitude can yield.



Thus ran my mind one summer afternoon,  
When holy Melancholy held control,  
And evening found me wandering alone  
For courted food to brace a famished soul.



The placid, classic Schuylkill is in view,  
A silver thread laid on a ground of green;  
Now from a steamer near the palisade  
The Navy clubs in uniform are seen.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Romantic parties in the fleet bateau  
Sing to the violin and sweet guitar,  
And jealous Luna, by her rival light,  
Drives from her dome the twinkle of the star.

On, on we go, o'er mirror-surface borne,  
And gentle zephyrs fan my fevered brow;  
The hillside grass is waving to the breeze,  
And woodland monarchs give a courtly bow.

I hear the farm-boy, vitalized by work,  
Sing merry ballads to a sturdy band;  
There is a chorus from the meadow-kine,  
And insect-orchestras are full and grand.

Oh this is life!—a soothing febrifuge  
For pilgrims town-worn in such varied ways.  
'Tis here I hope that in some rustic cot  
I'll sing my verse and end my fleeting days.



LAUREL HILL.

Though town has taught me deep philosophies  
That earth-improving poets would reveal,  
Yet now I want a vine-clad, rural home,  
Wherein to write the grandeur I may feel.



From tiny steamer, at a tiny wharf,  
Young lovers hasten for some new delight;  
I seek the quiet of a lone retreat,  
To muse and wait for eve to meet the night,

I have a holy mood to satisfy,  
And sigh for time to hush the noisy tread;  
I long to rove, in silence and alone,  
Famed Laurel Hill, fair City of the Dead.



And now I'm there, but courted privacy  
Awaits me not. I find throughout the ground  
Coquettish misses, self-conceited men—  
The airy talkers lacking thought profound.



LAUREL HILL.

Affected laughter tries its winning work ;

There's pomp, and pedantry, and shallow art ;

There's all that superficial nothingness

Too universal in the marriage mart.

To *them* it is a night for promenade,

To look at sculpture and the floral bloom,

To honey nonsense for the maiden ear,

While heeding naught that gives me godly gloom.

My soul is now beyond frivolity ;

There is a manly thesis to pursue ;

And this encroachment on religious joy

Falls like the pirate on a peaceful crew.

A generous mood would have them all partake

Of my craved banquet of ennobling dreams ;

Yet sighs to think they'll never more than taste,

And feels that life is fruitful in extremes.



LAUREL HILL.

In grief, I hasten to the river-side,  
To wait for later night to take the throng;  
I know a solemn solitude will make  
The Muse enchant me with sublimer song.



The giddy hum has died upon the ear,  
There's not a soul beneath the full-moon rays;  
I leave my hiding-place and rove the tombs,  
To seek imagination's varied phase.

Not vain the seeking, and I feel that bliss  
The pen of mortal never will translate:  
Hail, Solitude! were I deprived of *thee*,  
A bitter anguish would become my mate.

For thee I've often quit the festive board,  
And left fair woman in the gay saloon;  
In thee, O Solitude! my famished heart  
Has found a banquet that's a precious boon.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Thy quiet gives a fervid eloquence  
To all that Nature has on land and seas;  
Rocks have their "sermons," and the evening winds  
Make a solemn choir of the leafy trees.

The night is noonday; there is rare perfume  
Sent by the flowers as a floral treat;  
The plaintive tree-hymn, in a tone subdued,  
Is overture to melancholy sweet.

While feasting on that wondrous kind of food—  
That sweet though bitter, shunned yet sighed for soon—  
The music ceased, the fragile flowers bowed,  
And cloud of jet obscured the lucent moon.

Oppressive, torrid closeness filled the air,  
Then fierce tornado, like a frenzied wave;  
The marble statues trembled into life,  
And seemed like petrifications from the grave.



*LAUREL HILL.*

The whole ground rumbled like Vesuvius,  
And gave a laugh, that would make thunder mute—  
A knowing laugh, presaging massive fact  
And intellect so morbidly acute.

Now silence reigned, deep gloom maintained the throne ;  
Then, with self-confidence that would rejoice—  
With confidence possessed of conscious strength—  
The Graveyard spoke in rumbling, basso voice.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Ambitious man ! your struggles are in vain,  
If you would climb my proud and zenith height ;  
'Tis my great class who realize the fame  
To live for ever with increasing might.

We thought ambition in the human heart  
Would die of envy of our bright career ;  
But still we see the burning passion lives,  
And self-complacent candidates appear.



LAUREL HILL.

'Most all who grow this caustic on their health  
Are tamed and shudder when they think of *me*;  
We wield a sceptre terrifying kings,  
And we will hold it to eternity.

My theme is self. I'll not offend the taste,  
For I well play the rôle that I profess.  
Can we be ignorant of what we do,  
When daily drinking tears of deep distress?

Is genius unmindful of its worth,  
When hailed supreme throughout a cultured land?  
Can proud kings revel in unconscious wealth,  
When beggars haunt them in their castles grand?

Can maids have beauty and oblivion,  
When piercing darts of jealousy are shown?  
Can health give iron vigor to the arm,  
And that gigantic power be unknown?



LAUREL HILL.

No, no! say I, and we who hold the dead,  
Know what we are, and do, and see, and feel.  
Ambitious man! repose beneath yon oak,  
And you alone will hear what I reveal.



Now paused the voice, as though it would arrange  
The order of its great, exciting lore;  
And here, I thought, what startling fact will lead  
The thrilling mass in that unfailing store?

The pause continued, and I greatly feared  
Some fine abstraction would consume its time;  
Cried I, Foul potentate: return, return,  
Confess the sum and summit of your crime.

LAUREL HILL.

Confess my *crime*! Aha! I comprehend:  
You think an arch-ill governs all I do;  
Though I'm a foe, I would be known a friend;  
Though I'm a fiend, I am an angel too.



*LAUREL HILL.*

You see but crime in my exulting laugh,  
But there is laughter from a godly mood.  
Loud merriments oft' intervene my deeds,  
By way of self-rejoicing interlude.



O Laurel Hill! I'm expectation-wild.  
Rehearse your deeds, pray give me your intent;  
Now that I'm hailed by your commanding voice,  
Grant me the bleak, appalling argument.

Now followed fast the great dramatic points  
Of thunder-crash and deep, volcanic roll;  
The moon obscured, each 'lectric, blinding flash  
Appeared a wrath-flame from the graveyard soul.

In these phenomena of glare and sound  
And trembling tombs, the lightning streaks were hurled  
Upon a jet-black cloud, and formed these words:  
"My kingly station o'er the wide, wide world!"



*LAUREL HILL.*

LAUREL HILL.

Ambitious man! my argument is shown,  
And now I'll speak in calm, familiar tone.

Ere Chaos, weary of chaotic garb,  
Became an earth in all her grand attire,  
When mortals were not, *we* were not produced,  
With all our raging and aspiring fire.

But order reigned, and then mankind were made,  
The young grew old with new-born, vacant stare;  
There were the tottering in the palsied frame,  
The wrinkled face, the thin and silvered hair.

Of this some Oriental ground took heed,  
Then saw the sick, the herbs, and silent tread;  
Soon it beheld a funeral approach,  
And oped its bosom for the honored dead.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Now quickly grew perceptions that were new,  
And two desires of gigantic might:  
One was depraved—it was to terrify—  
And one to fill the heart-crushed with delight.

A sphere of action here became defined;  
'Twas plain: to Death all flesh and breath must yield;  
This grew Ambition to a brilliant height,  
And showed the land would prove a fruitful field.

'Twas seen that flesh-and-blood was daily born,  
And that it drooped and died, in every clime,  
That graveyards followed as necessity,  
And would be paramount for endless time.

We all became one energetic firm,  
And made Death agent to supply the tomb;  
And then began the everlasting work  
That gives the world sweet joy and bitter gloom.



LAUREL HILL.

We give to Death the pillage of the breath,  
And claim the bodies from adoring homes ;  
Our growing firm is active through the world,  
And our pale agent o'er *creation* roams.

In days, when earth had that primeval rule  
Of tribe submissive to appointed chief,  
Ambition grew a cynic, savage greed  
And Avarice infused the land with grief.

Her Argus-eyes found Industry at work,  
And craved her herds and fruitage of the soil ;  
Then roved the chieftain tyrant with his band,  
And plundered Labor of her honest toil.

This foul success, that made the victor rich,  
Brought pomp and luxury and cold disdain ;  
Then insult followed heinous injury,  
And for the victim forged the vassal-chain.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Revenge, now rising in the outraged heart,  
Broke forth in organized and martial ire;  
Hence wars arose; and, as we drank the blood,  
Ambition filled us with increasing fire.

Great governments have plied the iron rod,  
Till subjects led grand armies on their states;  
We've laughed to see kings battle in a sleep  
That groaned the anguish of their adverse fates.

To stay rebellion 'gainst oppressive law,  
To prop the fortunes of a failing crown,  
Tyrants have fought a foreign peaceful land—  
Ay, fought for home-strength, practice and renown.

Then Bigotry began religious feuds  
That drove mad zealots to a deadly strife;  
Fanatic crusades, called the "holy wars,"  
Brought ample harvest in the loss of life.



LAUREL HILL.

All deeds of blood gave jewels to our crown—  
More graves, yet growth of carnal appetite;  
Death proves a cunning agent, and our slabs  
And vaults and mounds are fertile in delight.



I hear a sigh from some one near,  
And a moan that must come  
With a scalding tear.  
I look around  
For the dismal sound,  
And a form  
By a willow tree is found.

I am *not* alone on Laurel Hill:  
There are souls like my own,  
And they drink their fill  
Of a noble gloom  
'Neath a full, round moon;  
They would ponder on man  
And his certain doom.



*LAUREL HILL.*

In a sable garb, 'mong the pendent leaves  
A maiden speaks, as she deeply grieves.

**MAIDEN.**

Thy violin no more will chain  
My willing heart with its sweet refrain.  
Its magic voice, like an angel's call,  
Is heard no more in the homestead hall.  
Those good, old friends, with soul like thine,  
Who hailed thy music as divine,  
Come in the calm and solemn eve,  
Look at thy violin and grieve.  
O God! while mere pretension has a sway,  
Why must a genius return to clay?

**LAUREL HILL.**

Hear that! Ha, ha! There's rapture in my ear.  
She mourns a character of highest type:  
An early sign declared the native bent—  
A heart in which rare harmonies were ripe.



*LAUREL HILL.*

He drew a rhetoric sublime from sound,  
And made air dense with most ecstatic chords ;  
He could imagine full, grand orchestras,  
And drank the bliss ideal life affords.

I've heard his bow bring forth a woodland bird,  
A mountain-torrent and the thunder's growl ;  
He'd give the lamb-bleat and the low of herd,  
The mewling cat and watch-dog's wailing howl.

When pouring heart-thought in melodic themes,  
I've seen his brow-dew equal manly tears ;  
With mirth around, I've found him with his dreams,  
Arranging odes on Death and fleeting years.

He'd melt the critic by a plaintive strain,  
Or rouse the martial by the battle din ;  
I've known him force old couples to the dance,  
Then bring a prayer from that violin.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Ay, he was courted for celestial sound  
That rivaled anthems of the heaven-choir;  
Then I resolved to show my jealous might,  
And brought him here to stop his hallowed fire.



Thought I: O God! to what infernal length  
Will jealousy and foul ambition go!  
A lamentation, by another grave  
Increased new hatred in my cup of woe.

I am not alone on Laurel Hill;  
There are souls like my own,  
And they'd drink their fill  
Of a holy gloom  
'Neath a full, round moon;  
They would mourn for the dead  
They have laid in the tomb—  
They would ponder on man  
And his certain doom.



*LAUREL HILL,*

**FIRST WIDOW.**

O pallid King! why bring my husband here,  
When he was joyous from an envied name?  
The marble finish from his classic hand  
Gives Laurel Hill her universal fame.



And, then, I heard a low "Ha, ha!"  
It seemed the faint, sarcastic sound  
Arose from Oriental ground,  
And simply said, "Ha, ha! Ha, ha!"

**LAUREL HILL.**

Hear that! Transoceanic sisters laugh.  
We have more sympathy than grudging man—  
My daily work is but the task of all,  
My grand success is glory for the clan.

They laugh to think proud flesh is but a toy—  
That men, whose art has garnished our estate,



*LAUREL HILL.*

Leave their renown and rot to sacred dust,  
Their fellow-craftsmen will commemorate.

She mourns a well-known sculptor, who could hew  
Unmeaning marble to a noted sage ;  
He has perpetuated honored forms,  
Who were a spur and progress to the age.

I heard his chisel carve a new design,  
And saw pride light his true, æsthetic eye ;  
And then, to revel in a rival mood,  
I sent my Agent and beheld him die.

So they brought him here,  
On a day so drear,  
And the eye of the sky  
Wept the heaviest tear.

And now he's alone,  
'Neath a cold, white stone ;



*LAUREL HILL.*

But his own, noble form,  
On a pedestal grand,  
To the world can be shown.



The Cemetery filled my soul with pain ;  
'Twas exultation blended with disdain.

**SECOND WIDOW .**

I cannot look in thy drear studio  
And see that easel by the vacant chair.  
Father of heaven ! lay me in his grave  
Before I'm frenzied by the weight of care.

**LAUREL HILL.**

His canvas gave the photographic truth,  
And ev'ry tint that fickle flesh has worn ;  
A few, brief sessions, and the world would say,  
A second self at any age was born.



*LAUREL HILL.*

A mother's sailor-boy was lost at sea ;  
But still they have him on their parlor wall,  
His laughing eyes are following their own,  
His lips are parted for the cheerful call.

A treasured maiden moulders in the grave,  
But joins the family group on social eves ;  
Her curls and lace seem moved by balmy air,  
Her snowy bosom with emotion heaves.

Such reproduction marked the genius,  
And kindred spirits came from far and near.  
When he was idolized, Death threw his lance,  
And mourners brought their worshiped idol here.



My rage exclaimed :  
O Fiend ! had I a superhuman sway,  
Soon would I stop your wanton, tragic play.



LAUREL HILL.

LAUREL HILL.

I know you would !

To crush my crown a million men would seek.

Indeed, they're willing, but the flesh is weak.

As soon as mortals realized our might,

They *did* rebel. A certain class arose,

Invoked Hygeia's art in stay of death

And tried to find what Nature would disclose.

They gathered berries, barks and roots and leaves ;

On many systems, in all morbid states,

Compared the action of this thing with that,

And grew a science that the Graveyard hates.

They'd patch the failing body, for a while,

Then strut their day to vaunt ambitious skill ;

But time brings patient, doctor and the nurse,

And Graveyards fatten fast as Death can kill.



*LAUREL HILL.*

On men of science we are well revenged,  
And daily fight them with a martial strife.  
Why should we not? They've proved a subtle foe,  
By holding Death when robbing flesh of life.



The flowers quake, the stately trees are swayed,  
And cast around a moving, ghost-like shade.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Here lies an actor who portrayed the depth  
Of Shakespeare's wonderful and varied soul:  
The moaning heard, beneath that monument,  
Is from a daughter lost to self-control.

I've seen her father take a page obscure,  
And make the meaning throb the public heart;  
Then heard the thought-born thunders of applause.  
In compliment to his dramatic art.



*LAUREL HILL.*

When he was heralded, throughout the world  
As brightest "star" of this enlightened age,  
'Twas then I played my heavy, tragic part,  
And hid from sight this monarch of the stage.

The champions of theologic schools  
Are often brought here from their work of grace;  
Each claimed to have Jehovah on his side,  
And deemed his creed had logic on its face.

When fine-spun argument will not avail,  
And icy congregations are unmoved,  
How churches tremble at the name of Grave,  
And how we laugh to see our power proved!

**A WOMAN IN BLACK.**

O cruel Grave! to take a man like thee—  
A soul sublime in broad humanity.



*LAUREL HILL.*

LAUREL HILL.

Hear that bleak burden of a heart distressed!  
Though I'm reproached, I'll own I'm much impressed.

She mourns a man of rare, exalted cast—  
A missionary with a glorious creed:  
'Twas charity. His fruitful, open purse  
Was ever private almoner to need.

He vied with angels in his watchful care—  
A care long wedded to his useful life;  
To give was blessed charity to self,  
And poverty was saved degrading strife.

He'd risk his blood in most polluted dens,  
And there make counsel brighter than his gold;  
He'd drive temptation from the wolf-watched door,  
Or see tried Virtue weeping thanks untold.



LAUREL HILL.

He never gave to find his gift in type  
Or be the theme of banquet-room applause;  
He strove to keep his right hand from the left,  
But gratitude *would* clarion his cause.

Though I have praised that true benevolence,  
And even joy, when such a heart has birth,  
Revenge is sweet; for such will make the poor  
Forget my power in their love of earth.

A SON.

Why rob the nation's legislative hall  
Of this true pilot for the ship of state?  
Why save the venal, vacillating tool,  
And take a king of candor and debate?

LAUREL HILL.

He mourns a father of colossal might,  
A stately, dark-haired man with dome-like head,



*LAUREL HILL.*

With eagle eyes far 'neath a massive brow—

A very monarch in majestic tread.

He had perception of unbounded range,

Could glean the diamond from a world of sand ;

His self-possession, giving regal mien,

Was born of ocean-logic at command.

When intellects would flounder in the dark,

When keen eyes clouded by the beam and mote,

He'd mould a Congress to his lucid will,

And keep salvating principles afloat.

He'd not proclaim crude, self-conflicting views

Where mental carpentry could make no joint,

Or cause the oratoric platform creak

'Neath frantic stamps to prove an empty point.

His elocution ran a wondrous scale—

From maiden-whisper to the thunder's roll,



*LAUREL HILL.*

His motions were the poetry of grace,  
His features mirrored every shade of soul.

When oratory promised high renown  
That centuries of progress cannot fade,  
The splendid meteor soon passed away,  
And left his ashes 'neath yon willow shade.

**A BETROTHED.**

O Laurel Hill! such unrelenting rage!  
This bard would cheer us in our pilgrimage.  
Life's many cares would be still more profuse  
Without the consolation of the Muse.

**LAUREL HILL.**

This attic songster, in a place obscure,  
Enriched the world, himself remaining poor.  
Hard was the battle, but his bounding flame  
Illumined earth and registered his name.



*LAUREL HILL.*

The finest point logician could evolve  
Had double charm in metrical attire;  
How dear ones gather in the winter eves  
To read, exclaim, to ponder and admire!

Some minor theme, by sorcery of words,  
Grew magnitude symmetrically wrought;  
From centre-point, a wondrous vision saw,  
The whole grand circle of sublimer thought.

He was so rhythm-haunted, that his mind  
But feebly worked in ways of common trade;  
They called him "visionary," but they owned  
The useful pathos that his verses made.

True poetry had proved a safety-valve  
For surplus power at a fever-pitch;  
When poorly clad and dining on a crust,  
He felt his genius had made him rich.



LAUREL HILL.

Astonishment declared, "A poet born!"

His *talk* was oft as metric as sublime;  
His stanza had the rare and precious freight  
That lost no grandeur in a search for rhyme.

Though gratified to think I've been his theme,  
Yet, when his *great* heart fired the public brain—  
Filled it with bliss-dreams and a love for earth—  
Death froze his form and filled a world with pain.

But hark!

It is a voice from Albion,  
A satisfied, ambitious sound  
Of a sister grave on Stratford ground.

GRAVE OF SHAKESPEARE.

The Bard of Avon, who had Hamlet "Pah!"  
At Yorick's skull, made bare by worm-live clay,  
Became, in turn, that same, unconscious dirt,  
To "stop a hole to keep the wind away."





*LAUREL HILL.*

O banded fiends ! your gross, enormous greed  
For gifted blood inflames to holy hate ;  
When genius has neared or gained the goal,  
Death prematurely carves a mournful date.

Who else could plan such calendars of crime ?  
You slay those blessed with appetites of health,  
And those so able to enjoy their fame,  
Or well dispense an honorable wealth.

This place of tombs, of flowers and perfumes,  
I sought to purify and grow my soul ;  
But you appear, a potentate of hell,  
And Horror holds me in her dark control.

Let me depart. I'd rather have the town,  
With all the discord, stench and sickly heat ;  
The hooting owlet fades upon my ear,  
And other birds have sought a calm retreat.



*LAUREL HILL.*

All cheering sounds are paralyzed by fright,  
The branch and flowers are in tremulo,  
I'll heed my heart and leave this horrid ground,  
Where joy is blighted in thy boast of woe.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Don't leave till my sister Ocean speaks.  
She too can a thrilling tale rehearse,  
And her fame pervades the universe.

**OCEAN.**

My watery grave is deepest ever made,  
Dug by the hand of Nature, not the spade.  
Like sister Land, we wear Ambition's crown,  
And joy to see the human freight go down.

How Oceans laugh, when Fashion struts the deck,  
So little dreaming of a midnight wreck!  
The man of science, on a foreign tour,  
The invalid, in search of health secure,



*LAUREL HILL.*

The husband, homeward bound to meet his wife,  
The lover, going to his more than life,  
The emigrant, who seeks the growing West,—  
All sink together to eternal rest.

Our King of Storms has made the timber creak,  
The gliding vessel springs a fatal leak,  
Then how the pompous pray and rave and shriek !

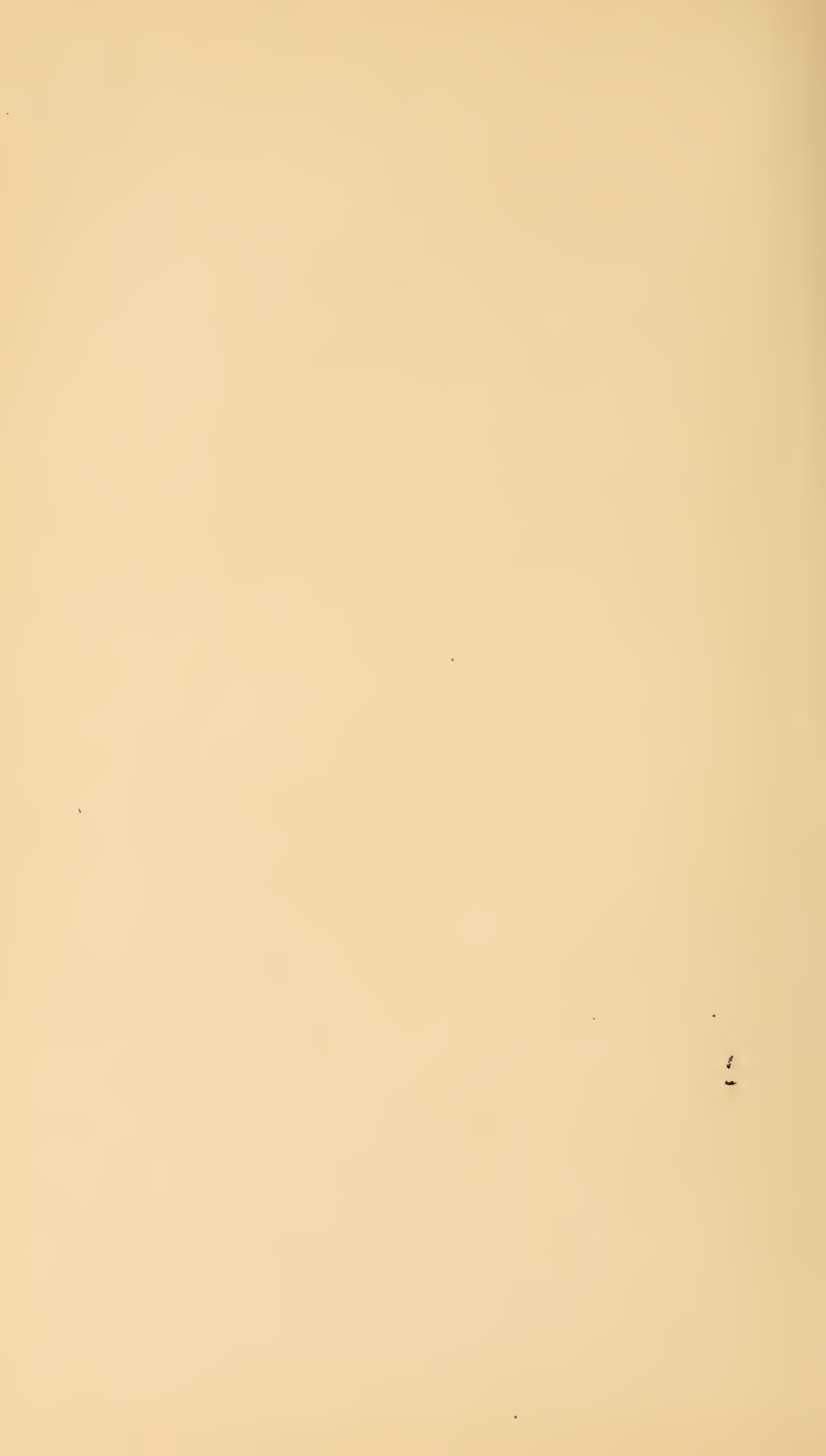
The stormy petrel sings the dirge  
Of flesh that's found an ocean home ;  
Our monuments are iceberg mounts,  
The angry wave and the snowy foam.

Human ambition's feverish dream :  
How insignificant you seem !

**CHORUS OF ALL GRAVES ON EARTH.**

How insignificant you seem !





*LAUREL HILL.*

No more! no more! I'm poisoned for a year!

I fear the scenes are stamped upon my eye,  
And that your words will linger in my ear

A torture and depression, till I die.

I see but charnel-house, the bier, the shroud,  
And foul corruption feeding fish and worms;

I find you all a black, malicious curse,  
And red revenge within my bosom burns.

Compared to this, I'll take the wicked town,  
Its wrong is godly to your crime so bold;

Let me return, that memory may fade

To full extinction in the race for gold.

**LAUREL HILL.**

You shall not go;

There's something you must know.

Remain, thou disconcerted man:

Now heed my pure and holy plan.



*LAUREL HILL.*

For all that's damning, dark and fell,  
Bright blessings I will parallel.



Here came a prelude ushering delight,  
The moon gave double splendor to the night,  
A witching music filled a balmy air,  
My heart threw off its mountain-weight of care,  
The flowers gave more delicate perfume,  
The birds returned and warbled 'neath the moon,  
The pomp and bravo left a basso voice,  
That in humanity would now rejoice,  
Diviner mood enchained the classic ground,  
And swayed her sceptre with a love profound.  
No stage can show this transformation-scene,  
No art can paint it in the canvas dream.  
Thought I, O Graveyard! what a grand control,  
To thus perform;—  
To bring such calm  
From such a storm,—



*LAUREL HILL.*

To play thus on  
My ear and vision, mind or soul!

**LAUREL HILL.**

Now recognize me as a firm, true friend,  
And find all rival virtue in eclipse.  
You'll learn that millions court my fond embrace,  
And speak my name with panegyric lips

Some loathe, who'd love me, if they only knew  
How prescience will prompt to worthy deeds—  
There! Wait and hear how mercy is misjudged  
By that sad mother weeping in her weeds.

**THE MOTHER.**

My little, baby girl that banished gloom!  
Forgive me, Death: if I demur;—  
But why consign it to the tomb?



LAUREL HILL.

LAUREL HILL.

How oft' this lamentation grieves my ear!

Were she alive, see where she'd be to-day.



Now came a vision, like a Thespian scene,

A den with lust in all-debasing sway.

A witching blonde, who mourns her fading charms,

Plays fervent toy at any carnal price;

While drunken imps plan arson for a theft,

With maudlin oath, she throws the losing dice.

The tempter came; she fell; then, under ban,

No wedlock placed love's fruitage on her knee;

'Twas all submission to offensive lust,

And wine to drown her mental misery.

LAUREL HILL.

What say you *now*? Was I not more than true,

To save the babe from such a darksome fate?



LAUREL HILL.

But *age* has failed to comprehend my work,  
As you will learn, by what it would relate.

AN AGED WOMAN.

My brilliant boy, in his eternal sleep,  
Leaves old age wakeful on life's battle-field!  
O Grave! how mean a victory, to take  
My earthly anchor and my daily shield!

LAUREL HILL.

Poor, grieving soul! She knows but half the truth.  
Now see how kind to take him in his youth.



Another vision—'twas a solemn court—  
Oppressive silence and the anxious face;  
Then, soon a mother sobbed a prayer to God  
To shield her from a terrible disgrace.

“How say you, gentlemen?” the clerk now cried;  
“Have you agreed?” From foreman lips there fell



*LAUREL HILL.*

The sad conviction, and the sentence gave  
A forger ten years in a prison-cell.

**LAUREL HILL.**

See what a burial has gained!  
But, still, that parent, year by year,  
Will linger here,  
And I, her friend, am frequently defamed.

**ANOTHER WIDOW.**

O Conrad! Conrad! when thy years of toil  
Had made home happy and all faces bright,  
'Twould seem the Grave from vile, barbaric pomp,  
Sent Death to banish our domestic light.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Misjudged again. But we, like mortal men,  
Are oft' accused without reflection due.  
I know I took him from a couch of ease;  
But see my goodness and admire anew.





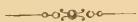
*LAUREL HILL.*

A vision showed a maniac in chains—

'Twas Conrad raving in a mad-house cell,  
The wife was weeping in a corridor,  
And bidding cherished hope a sad farewell.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Ambitious bard: her loss was but her gain.  
Behold sound Reason banished from her throne,  
And useless, raving flesh, in dungeon home,  
Tied, like mad cattle, by the ring and chain.  
But hark, once more. Hear that heart-rending cry.



From the one, small cloud in an azure sky,  
The moon came forth, and I then observed  
Another form near a beech close by.

**LAUREL HILL.**

That maid is called  
The ghost of Laurel Hill.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Through summer heat or winter snow,  
She wends her way to that tomb below.  
Year after year, I've seen her bring  
The welcome flowers of the spring.  
She keeps the grasses fresh and green,  
The marble slab and railings clean,  
The periwinkle free from dust,  
And blemish from the sculptured bust.  
They call her ghost and witch and sprite,  
Because she haunts the mound at night.  
She'll sanely ornament the Grave,  
Kneel, kiss the stone, then wildly rave—  
Ay, rave with fierce, insane despair,  
Till she foams at the mouth and tears her hair.  
She was to have been a blushing bride,  
In the wedding march her lover died—  
Fell down dead by his darling's side.  
Now all her life is in that mound.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Poor girl! Poor girl!  
I'll soon consign her to this ground.  
Once more behold a future hid from view,  
Behold my mercy and my power too.



I saw the gallows in a prison yard,  
A murderer stood pallid 'neath the cord,  
A minister was kneeling by his side,  
And prayed for intercession of the Lord.

The culprit said: "'Look not upon the wine,'  
For saints are devils by the social bowl;"  
The noose adjusted and the black cap drawn,  
Eternity now claims another soul.

*LAUREL HILL.*

'Tis true, a maid has wept and raved,  
But see what charity has saved.





*LAUREL HILL.*

Yes, yes, I cried, you have my special heed.  
I see the realistic force  
Of each potential deed.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Could dead men speak, you'd hear ten thousand tongues  
Exalt my virtue to the last degree;  
They'd truly say that tender, saintly Death  
Has timely ended great calamity.

Yon Grave, that's blooming with forget-me-nots,  
Contains a rescue from the almshouse drear;  
The form, beneath the honeysuckle vine,  
Was overworked and starved from year to year.

That cypress marks a case of hope deferred,  
Until a heart was sickened to the core;  
The mignonette received a frightful corpse,  
A soldier gangrened in the clash of war.



*LAUREL HILL*

The white verbena holds a loving wife,  
Deserted by the one who pledged her bliss.  
Here lie the maids betrayed by courtly knaves,  
Girls led by vows sealed with a fiery kiss.

The eglantine conceals a frame bowed down  
By genius too great for feeble health;  
And that wall-ivy marks the common case—  
Of age dependent, from the loss of wealth.

The woodbine, too, shows conscientious work—  
Work that a poet should divinely sing,  
It covers flesh that passed the hundredth year,  
“Sans eyes, sans teeth, sans taste, sans everything.”

Wife, children, kindred and familiar friends  
Had died and left him solitary grief;  
While praying for a union with the loved,  
Death broke the life-thread, as a sweet relief.



*LAUREL HILL.*

All these would wait, and pine, and pray for Death  
To soon avert some awful, mundane dread,  
And then compassion sent the sable hearse  
To bring their relics to the peaceful dead,—  
The very flesh that shuddered at my name,  
When hope was high and vigor ruled the frame.

**UNIVERSAL CHORUS OF GRAVES.**

Had they not ridden in thy friendly hearse,  
Time would have proved a weary, dreary curse.

**LAUREL HILL.**

Right, sisters, right!—a weary, dreary curse.

I feel that bliss of ripe benevolence,  
The palm for charity I've nobly won.  
Behold my smile.



Here came a sacred light,  
More luminous than ushered by the sun.



*LAUREL HILL.*

LAUREL HILL.

Death deals his blow in such a subtle way;

Sometimes he flatters men to over-toil,—  
To overtax by labor manual,  
Or over-burn the student's midnight-oil.

Some lady, heated in the gay quadrille,

Will quickly seek the penetrating air;  
Another mourns a wish that's unfulfilled,  
And breaks beneath a weight of wild despair.

And sometimes, when the cares are mountain-high,

And dead-hope spectres haunt with hellish pride,  
He'll intervene a timely accident,  
Or banish reason for a suicide.



O Grave! as you're the most intensive foe,

And prove yourself the most endearing friend,



LAUREL HILL.

LAUREL HILL.

I'll claim we are the Mighty Kings of earth—

The leading potentates till time shall end.

The English language may become extinct,

Your proud names fade from each historic page,

The site of this great city may be lost,

But *we* 'll be known in every clime and age.



True! true! I cried; and, as I bowed my head,

I heard men talking and the hasty tread.

Then, when I saw the shovel, pick and spade,

I knew the solemn nature of their trade.

To work they went beneath a full, round moon.

And sang this grave-song to a doleful tune.

SONG OF THE GRAVEDIGGERS.

All they who live must die, must die,

And pass from mortal sight:



*LAUREL HILL.*

No matter how we may oppose,  
Pale Death will gain the fight.  
He takes the monarch from his crown,  
The sage from all his great renown.  
Yes, they who live must die, must die,  
And in the land or water lie.

No gold can tie a man to earth,  
Or beauty save a maid;  
In face of every plea and plan,  
Each in the grave is laid.  
Here is the traveller's final home,  
Where hermits are not more alone.  
Yes, they who live must die, must die,  
And in the land or water lie.

But while the flesh will soon become  
A foul, offensive sight,  
We'll dig, and trust we have a soul  
For that immortal flight.



LAUREL HILL.

Then we can ply the pick and spade  
Without a loathing for the trade,  
With hope grim Death will ope the door  
To higher joys for evermore.



Here I exclaimed:  
With hope grim Death will ope the door  
To higher joys for evermore!

Be that *my* hope—I took them by the hand—  
Be that the North Star on my stormy sea;  
Oh, let that feeling grow within my soul—  
Undying faith in immortality!

What waste of skill to mould wise man of dust,  
Then give both flesh and mind a speedy end!  
What recompense for all these years of woe?  
What aid to God-schemes would our short lives lend?  
I bow to reason, and delight to probe  
A grand, deep problem to the very core;



*LAUREL HILL.*

Is there no future for development

To weigh profounder themes than known before?

I've cultured feeling. When I breathe my last,

Will no emotion thrill with holy bliss?

Think of the treasure in a fervent Muse!

Am I denied ecstatic joy like this?

I've cultured friendship, and I have the heart

To feel the meaning of that sacred tie;

Am I to see no loving, tender look?

Are friends to part for ever, when they die?

On earth, I feast on music. When I leave,

Am I to hear no sweet, appealing strains,

Nor rouse beneath a glowing eloquence,

Or hear a wife's assuring love-refrains?

The scenic grandeur of the wondrous world

Implants an ardor for majestic scenes:



LAUREL HILL.

Will I not rove a future universe,  
Read Nature's book, and fathom what it means?

When dead, will not the mind and eye and ear  
Enjoy, at least, earth-mood and sound and sight?  
Will all this life-gain bleakly terminate  
In one unconscious and eternal night?

My soul rebels. If I believed it true,  
I'd sink beneath the melancholy thought;  
I could not breathe it to a lively hope,  
Then see it die from anguish over-wrought.

An arch-grand, final vision soothed my brain,—  
The Graveyard showed immortal life supreme,  
And such a heaven filled my thankful heart  
I blessed the ground, then woke to find—a *dream!*



I, who was focus of this joy and gloom,  
Awaking, found me in my sultry room.



*LAUREL HILL.*

Then, looking down upon the sun-dried street,  
I saw the masses move through dust and heat.  
Each was intent upon a certain line—  
For fame, for fortune, or to pass the time.  
Thought I, still pondering that final scene—  
A scene I feel our Father *does* fulfil—  
Ay, some dread Death, and some would yield their breath,  
And give the mortal to famed LAUREL HILL.

THE END.





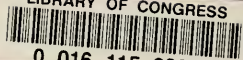








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